



OHIO ASSOCIATION OF REGIONAL COUNCILS

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## NEWS

For Release: August 19, 2009  
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### **Passenger Rail a Necessity in State Seeking Transportation Edge: Federal Rail Stimulus Money Essential for Ohio's Future**

Seeing the promise of federal stimulus funds for intercity passenger rail, the Ohio Association of Regional Councils (OARC) today supported the state's efforts to develop a robust passenger rail system to service its residents. .

John Getchey, president of the Ohio Association of Regional Councils, an organization of 21 regional agencies that represents more than 10 million Ohio residents, said Ohio may find it difficult to connect to a future high speed rail network if it fails to develop substantial passenger rail service in the state within the next few years.

"States that border Ohio are in the process of developing intercity passenger rail service. Ohio is already behind," said Getchey, also executive director of the Eastgate Regional Council of Governments located in Youngstown. "As the state pulls together its application for federal stimulus funds, we must understand that if Ohio is to leverage its considerable advantages of location and population density, it must be successful in receiving its share of the \$8 billion in federal stimulus funds that have been set aside to fund rail projects."

Ohio is the only state in the Midwest that does not operate a state-supported passenger rail system, but that will change if Ohio is successful in receiving millions in stimulus dollars to build the 3C "Quick Start" rail corridor, which would eventually lead to high speed passenger rail. The money would improve rail lines, buy railcars and introduce up to 79 mph service along a 250-mile route that would connect Cincinnati to Dayton, Columbus and Cleveland. About 6 million people live along the route, which is one of the most densely populated rail corridors in the nation.

"The increased demand for improved transportation that Ohio faces is daunting," said Mark Policinski, OARC member and executive director of the Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana Regional Council of Governments. "We need to invest in transportation modes we've ignored – like rail – if we are to meet the demand to keep people and freight moving safely and efficiently in the future. The rail stimulus funds present that opportunity."

If Ohio receives the funding, passenger trains can be back and running by 2011, and eventually lay the foundation for a nationally planned high speed rail system where trains would travel at speeds up to 110 miles per hour and connect Ohio to Chicago, the eastern seaboard and other destinations.

"Right now, we're the hole in the doughnut," said Howard Maier, vice president of OARC and executive director of the Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency in Cleveland. "Everything around us is moving down the tracks. That's why we're pledging our resources to help the Ohio Department of Transportation and



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the Ohio Rail Development Commission submit the best possible application that the federal government will receive.”

Ohio's application is due on October 2. Public meetings will be held across Ohio to gain citizen and stakeholder input into the proposed 3C “Quick Start” service and eventual high speed rail in the 3C corridor. The next step would be to consider expansion of service to include passenger rail and eventually high speed rail service on the Cleveland-Youngstown-Pittsburgh route, the Cleveland-Toledo-Chicago route, the Toledo-Columbus route and more. The next stakeholder meeting is set to take place on Thursday, August 20 at 10:00 a.m. at the Fawcett Center in Columbus.

OARC's mission is to coordinate voices at a state and federal level; to strengthen the role and authority of regional councils; and to collaborate, coordinate and solve problems in the areas of transportation, environment and land use planning within the framework of state policy

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#### **2009 OARC Officers**

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*Eastgate Regional Council of Governments - Youngstown*

##### **Howard Maier -**

##### **Vice-President**

*Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency - Cleveland*

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